

Army & Air Force Exchange Service Corporate Communications

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## Credit Card Fees up Over 20 Percent at AAFES Facilities in 2008

DALLAS – The convenience and use of bank-issued debit and credit cards at BXs and PXs cost the military community dearly last year. In fact, Army & Air Force Exchange Service shoppers who reached for a bank-issued card in '08 ended up shelling out more than \$79 million in fees, up 21 percent compared to 2007.

"A dual mission to provide quality merchandise and services at competitively low prices and generate earnings to support Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs means that something as seemingly insignificant as a credit or debit fee can add up to a major quality of life issue," said AAFES' Senior Enlisted Advisor Chief Master Sgt. Jeffry Helm. "Because banks charge an average of 1.49 percent of the transaction total when the credit or debit card is swiped, every purchase made with one of these cards impacts the exchange's ability to maximize the investment military Families are making in their community."

While all purchases, regardless of the form of payment used, have the potential to help strengthen the exchange benefit, shoppers who use the exchanges' exclusive MILITARY STARSM Card or pay cash maximize their individual impact on critical MWR efforts.

"Traditionally, two-thirds of earnings generated from a sale is paid to morale, welfare and recreation, while the other third is invested in improvements that enhance the shopping experience," said Helm. "This structure means that decreased fees can quickly provide additional arts and crafts supplies, reduced green fees or maybe even a new aquatic center."

Since 2001, AAFES shoppers have paid more than \$500 million in fees to card-issuing banks, resulting in lost revenues for the military community. Unlike bank cards, profits generated from MILITARY STARSM Card purchases are shared with military communities through contributions to MWR services. These funds reduce the tax burden of all U.S. citizens and are used to fund Youth Services, Armed Forces Recreation Centers, aquatic centers, post functions and golf courses that are enjoyed by military families across the globe.

"Using the MILITARY STARSM Card or cash is one of the easiest ways for authorized shoppers to directly impact their exchange and MWR benefits," said Helm.

"Reducing unnecessary expenses such as bank fees not only go a long way in strengthening the overall exchange benefit, but also the dividend operations annually generate for the military community."

The MILITARY STARSM Card is accepted at all AAFES, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Exchange activities, as well as the Exchange Catalog and the Exchange Online store at [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com) <<http://www.aafes.com/>> .

Authorized exchange shoppers can learn more about the MILITARY STARSM Card by visiting [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com) <<http://www.aafes.com/>> and click on the MILITARY STARSM Card icon.